

MARRIAGE AMONG /KUNG BUSHMEN

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logical father, as well as his mother's husband, should do something nice for him. 159
Perhaps when he receives his first assegai his begetter will give it, for that is a very 848
proud thing—but we do not know what the future holds for these people or where
they will be by then.

The dominance of men.

Wives are much desired by the young men, who usually wait for years for their 562
infant fiancées to grow up, and by men who want second wives, and by widowers. [581]
/Kung women are not only precious as mates, they are the food-gatherers and supply [222]
more of the daily food than the men do. Hunting¹ is very arduous in the Kalahari and [462]
the hunters succeed in bringing a big meat animal to the werf only about once or [224]
twice a month. Meanwhile women have dug roots and gathered berries and the other
wild plant foods to feed their families every day. /Kung women in their two roles
make a very great contribution.

In /Kung society, however, the magnitude of their contribution does not make
women dominant. There are factors which bring the men forward clearly into
dominance and leadership.

The primary factor is undoubtedly strength. /Kung men are small and slender, [142]
but they are wiry and vigorous. With their strength they carry and protect the very 147
life of their people. When they swing their weapons and implements and their
small children on to their shoulders and stride out in front of the women, the image
seems to reveal, as vividly as if a great artist had painted it, how the laden following
women are borne up by the strength of their men and take heart from them.

Another factor which brings men clearly forward is the character of hunting and 462
its reward. Women bring the daily food, but there is only drudgery in digging and 562
picking in the hot sun and trudging back in the early evening to the werf with heavy [222]
roots and berries and babies all sagging in the pouches of their karosses, a small dead
tree or two on one shoulder for the night fire, possibly another child astride the other
shoulder. Many of the vegetable foods, furthermore, are rather tasteless and harsh
and are not very satisfying. There is nothing splendid about returning with vege- [262]
tables and wood. The return of the hunters is vastly different. The intense craving [262]
for meat, the anxiety that goes with the hunt, the deep excitement of the kill, finally [224]
the eating and the satisfaction reach to the very core of the people, engaging power- [152]
ful emotions. Once, when an eland had been killed and the hunters were sighted
with the meat on their backs, moving in a dark, lumpy, bobbing line in the golden
grass, we heard the sound of voices in the werf rising in volume and pitch like the
hum of excited bees. Some people ran toward the hunters, others crowded together at
the edge of the werf, some danced up and down, the children squealed and ran about,
the boys grappled and tussled together. The motion and sound had the effect of
a vibration. Another time a young man who was said to be the best hunter in
the region (/Qui Hunter we called him, his people called him Short /Qui), had been 462
charged by a magnificent cock ostrich on a big open pan where there was no refuge. 562
He knelt facing the creature till it was within close range and shot an arrow straight 224

¹ John Marshall has described /Kung hunting in
his film, *The Hunters*, Peabody Museum Film Study
Center, Harvard University, and in 'Man as

Hunter', *Natural History*, the magazine of the
American Museum of Natural History, New York,
vol. lxvii, No. 6, June, and No. 7, August, 1958.

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into a new place, although now they had no scherms. For the⁶⁰⁹ next days they had waited and listened, and when they had heard our truck leave they had assumed that we were gone, and had returned to get the rest of their things. Then they had noticed our trucks, and believing that they were surrounded and had fallen into our trap, they had come to surrender. Ukwane felt more relaxed and laughed at this, a^[152] warm, wheezy chuckle, showing a few teeth, slapping his chest and coughing from the smoke which he had been inhaling deeply. Seeing Ukwane, the rest of us laughed, too, but Gai only stiffened and smiled an icy smile. Behind his head the sun was setting, small and red, away over the edge of the flat plain, making all the little, distant trees against it look black and very lonely; and the new moon followed after into the salmon light, a heavy crescent flat on its back and bow-shaped, yellow and malevolent like the smile.

Before they went to sleep that night, the two men accepted a second bucketful of water as a present. The bucket they would return, but the water was for them alone, an enormous^[271] present in the desert, for which they were very grateful. They began to drink from it, scooping the water up with their hands and, later, lifting the bucket to drink from its rim. After that they lay down, naked as they were on the bare⁵¹³ ground, close to the fire, with their knees bent, letting as much skin as possible be exposed to the heat. The warm smoke and ashes blew over them and they went to sleep on their sides as Bushmen always must, with one ear on the ground but with the other up and listening, to hear what comes along. Because it was cold they woke up often, and every time they woke they drank, so in the morning only the bottom of the pail had water in it, frozen into a circle of ice.

The next day the two men agreed to take some of us to⁶⁰⁹ their werf, and we drove off with Ukwane in the jeep and

152 The Bushmen as well as the gods ignore the suffering of
animals. When they opened the pit and took out the tortoise
264 several hours later it did look delicious, and the meat, which
came easily off the small, thick bones, smelled delicious
brewed in the green leaves, and the thin young boys smiled
happily and brought their tsama rinds to be filled from the
mortar where Gai put the pieces he had picked off and had
pounded to make them even and small.

262 While there was gemsbok meat and tortoise meat, the
rabbit was not worth eating, and it hung from the tree,
where it dried, like a little husk, to be moistened again and
eaten when nothing else was left. It swung in the breeze like
a leaf, like a tiny, eerie ornament.

252 The lizard was eaten that evening by the three young boys,
264 who built a fire of their own, where they sat like hunters back
from a hunt; with the red light of the fire on their thin faces,
making their eyes bright, they roasted the lizard in the coals
and ate it, and pulled its tiny bones out of their teeth.

The Fire

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flames for a moment like a flame itself, then slipping down⁷³¹ behind the fire, made the rising smoke a great, soft, purple cloud. As the sky darkened, the flames around us seemed brighter and more yellow, and farther away we saw a thousand smaller fires burning, each in a tuft of grass or in a tree.

After we had eaten we sat watching our burning wall move away from us, listening to the cries of birds, day birds chased from their branches by the fire, night birds flying through the smoke to catch insects that were trying to escape. All the air stank with an oily odor given off by the burning trees—not at all the pleasant smell of burning wood, but a deathly odor, the smell of a forest being destroyed.

When we lay down in our blankets to sleep we found that even the ground was warm, and as soot and ashes drifted over us we lay awake and listened. Once during the night we heard something large run past us. A little later, farther away, we heard the sharp roar of a lion who must have tried to cross a patch of burned ground and had singed his soft paws. We heard his slow footsteps as he tested the earth carefully, then a grunt as he was scorched again. It made him cross, for he walked in a huge half-circle around us with a growl running steadily in his throat. I had thought that the Bush-^[152] men were asleep, but they had also heard him and they^{522]} laughed. Now and then, during the night, the burned trees crashed around us, and as our fiery wall moved slowly away, the rising smoke was gray in its yellow light, the stars were all obscured.

Before dawn in the morning the crescent of the new moon¹³² rose, the tiniest sliver in the chilly air, followed by the salmon band of light, redder than usual because of the smoke. The wind must have blown a good deal of the fire back on itself because much of it was out, leaving a cloud of smoke hanging

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bers of Ukwane's band cut little strips from the cheeks of the ²²⁴574
gemsbok and sustained themselves with that.

An atmosphere of tension and strain pervaded over the ⁵⁷⁴578
whole werf. The Okwa people had arrived primed with jealousy, and had surely accused Ukwane of selfishness; the false spring, the dry conditions at Okwa had surely given their jealousy momentum. By giving most of the gemsbok to the newcomers, Ukwane had done all he could, for he had shown with his immediate generosity, and with the magnitude of his gesture, that they had nothing to fear from him. Of course, the members of his own band were as jealous of the newcomers as the newcomers were of them, but Ukwane surely felt that the internal struggles of his own band, easier to cope with, would be forgotten sooner.

The tension showed itself in struggles over food. Twikwe ²⁶²578
made a soup from a bone of the foot, mixing it in the rind of ¹⁵²578
one of the melons she had gathered, and when it was cooked she drank it herself out of the tsama rind, watched all the time by her son Wite. When she could stand his hungry eyes no longer, she put her bowl on the ground so that both of them could scoop up the broth with tortoise shells. After they had eaten part of it, Twikwe decided that it was time to pass the bowl to Kutera, who sat a little distance from them, eating nothing, looking very scrawny and trying not to watch. Twikwe started to do so; then, remembering her son, who was still hungry, she reached behind her for a second tsama rind, a little one, which she would fill for him. In this way she would, of course, have none left for herself, but she preferred to share. Adults are used to hunger, and it seems that the older Bushmen become, the less they mind deprivation. Children are different, and as their needs are considered more pressing than the adults', they are accustomed to receiving

262 more. Twikwe herself had among her possessions a fiber
 578 string, which, she said, she kept to wind around her belly
 ● 152 when she was very hungry for the purpose of warding the
 [261] hunger away.

Wite was tired and cross, and his patience was worn thin by hunger, and when he saw what his mother was doing he realized that he would have less food than he had expected. He lost his temper, shrieked at Twikwe, and tried to keep her from reaching the little rind so that she would have no container to give him a smaller share in—a very Bushman-like thing to do, instead of trying to snatch the large, full rind, perhaps—and the two of them struggled, each tugging at the little rind and each exclaiming wildly. The old woman won the struggle and filled the rind with soup, using her tortoise shell as a spoon, hindered once again by Wite, who snatched the spoon away, still trying to prevent her filling the small rind for him. Twikwe struggled for the spoon, and, seeing that he was going to lose it, Wite quickly ladled an extra spoonful into the little rind and sat back resigned while Twikwe thrust the little rind toward him. He took it finally and sat sulkily, not eating, but with his lips pressed against the side of the rind, his eyes hard and shining, staring at nothing over the top. Twikwe handed the larger share to Kutera, who pretended not to have noticed the struggle and who thanked Twikwe in an ingratiating way.

There was another struggle over food that evening, started as a malicious joke by Gai. When Gai saw Wite with a strip of meat from the gemsbok's cheek he snatched it out of Wite's hand and pretended to eat it. When Wite, tried beyond endurance, burst into tears and flew at Gai, Gai ran away and really did eat the meat, chewing as he ran, keeping just out of Wite's reach. The chase ended under a tree, where Gai, seizing a branch, grappled Wite with his legs and swung

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him off the ground. Wite did not resist, but swung limp and resigned, and when Gai released him he started to walk away. Gai had eaten all the meat except one morsel, and this he tossed to Wite, who picked it up from the ground and ate it apathetically.

Only the baby set a good example. I had picked him up and was carrying him when the three young boys of Ukwane's band noticed that he was mouthing something and holding something else in his hand. For a joke they extended their palms, telling him to share what he had in his hand, and he gave it readily. It was only the crackly skin that flakes off bones when they are roasted, quite flavorless, impossible to chew; Nhwakwe was only playing with it and the boys only pretended to take a bite, then threw it away. But either the baby didn't see them reject it or didn't care because in a moment he made them another present, the meat that he had been holding in his mouth. The young boys didn't see where he got it and they were about to eat it when Nhwakwe opened his mouth to smile and they noticed. They threw it down, but the baby spat some onto his finger and offered it to them anyway, and when they didn't take it he smeared it on their chests.

After the unhappy hour of eating, the people of Ukwane's band, their appetites dulled even though their bellies were not full, seemed more relaxed and the young boys went off to join the boys from the visiting band. The youngsters were always friends. The tensions suffered by all the members of both the bands did not affect their enjoyment of each other.

That evening the boys sat down near one of the fires and talk, and they told each other all the things that had happened since they last had met, perhaps a year before. Most of the incidents had happened fairly recently and most amounted to anecdotes about the other members of the

578 bands, who at the time were barely out of earshot. One story
522 concerned Dasina, how she had fainted from smoking too
152 much the day we had come, and to show exactly what had
happened, Wite and Witabe acted the scene, Wite taking the
part of Dasina and fainting on Witabe's shoulder while the
other boys laughed. Bushmen's jokes and stories are usually
funny at the expense of a person, an animal, or the god Pishi-
boro, maliciousness being one way in which Bushmen rid
themselves of their resentments.

536 Somewhat later Wite and Giamakwe acted for the others
831 the scene of the hyena's mating, as they imagined it or knew
825 it to be, for the night it had happened only the sound had
reached us and the hyenas had not been seen. Giamakwe
took the part of the male hyena, Wite took the part of the
female. First they walked together on all fours and rubbed
faces, and then Giamakwe climbed on Wite's back, emitting
a lonesome howl just like the howl we had heard. It was not
meant to be funny, and the other boys watched it calmly,
treating the mating of hyenas as a matter of course. All in
all, it was a majestic imitation, with snarls and growls, then
mounting and pretending to copulate with shivering and
ecstasy, then more growls, until finally the male fell away ex-
hausted and curled up on his side, whereupon the female at-
tacked him. It took a long time from start to finish, the Bush-
man boys being so literal that they not only gave a precise
rendition of the event but took exactly the amount of time
that the hyenas had taken.

574 The adults had not watched the children but were visiting
quietly with each other, some of the men from the Okwa
band having come to Ukwane's werf to sit at the fires. Very
late at night, when the Firewood Star was rising and the
Zebra Stars of Orion were just setting foot upon the earth,
the visitors got up to go.

159 Toma remarked that the meat was there for any use, but
 578 Tu misunderstood him and, thinking that he denied meat to
 593 her and to her mother, she flew into a rage, attacked Toma,
 • 152 and gave him a nasty bite on his arm. Toma lost his temper
 entirely and pinched her cheeks together until his fingers met
 in her mouth. His anger had come now, the people said, and
 he threw her into the fire, saying: "She is a woman. Why
 does she make me so angry? Shall I take a stick?"

A small crowd had gathered, and, as usual, the family quarrel became a public affair. Several people helped Tu out of the fire, found her barely scorched, but her cousin seized Toma and began to shake him. This enraged Toma so much that he caught the cousin around the waist and threw him into the onlooking crowd. The people said: "We must stop Toma because if he is so angry he may kill someone," and with that they led the cousin out of Toma's sight.

Toma shouted after: "If you do that again, we will get our arrows and fight to the death. Stop here. I am very angry. Do not make me more angry."

One of the men who had helped Tu said to the cousin: "I took his wife from the fire. You, her cousin, almost got killed for the way you went at Toma. If you want to help people, don't get angry with them. Keep calm. Don't increase anger as you did with Toma." With these sage words the incident was over.

159 The people said: "After that everyone knew how angry
 593 Toma could be, so from that day on he never had another fight." Everyone honored and respected him, everyone except his wife.

But Tu had certain redeeming qualities. When she was in a good mood she was charming. She would smile at everyone, speak in a light voice instead of the low, menacing voice that

Short Kwi the Hunter

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three-legged dog. This morning, though, he did not look at ¹⁵¹ anyone and seemed more silent even than he had been before.

The men made a carriage of their arms and lifted Short ⁴⁸² Kwi to the top of the truck, and in the process one of them ¹⁵¹ lost his footing so that Short Kwi was jounced, which must have hurt him although he did not show it, Bushmen being very good at concealing pain or despair. His wife climbed on to help make him comfortable and to receive their bundles, which were being handed up, and at the sight of this his baby ¹⁵² began to cry without a sound, slow tears rolling down her cheeks and dropping to the ground. I lifted the baby and tried to play with her, jumping a little and smiling to make her smile, although of course I could not cheer her, and when Short Kwi's wife looked over the truck's side the baby twisted away from me and held up her arms.

When Short Kwi was ready we asked who would come ²²⁴ with us, and most of his relatives decided to wait and join us ⁸⁵⁷ later because one of the young boys, a child of twelve or so, ⁸⁶⁶ had shot his first buck two days before and as the buck had still not been found, the people did not want to leave it. Toma's son himself wanted to remain because, it turned out, the buck had been shot with an arrow which he had given to another boy, who in turn had given it to the young hunter, and Toma's son, as original owner of the arrow, wanted his rightful share of the meat. When Toma said that his son could wait if he wanted but that we couldn't wait for him, his son turned to some other little boys who stood near him and began discussing the possibility of his joining the search for the animal. It was very interesting to see this conversation, these adult dealings beginning among the ten- and twelve-year-olds, these new, young hunters, these small figures of hope and strength, and we waited a long time while

224 Toma's son rubbed his head with his tough little fingers to
 857 make up his mind. Finally he left his friends and climbed on
 866 the truck. Home was too far to walk to, he said, and he was
 going to forfeit. As we drove away, his friends ran after us,
 shouting that they would bring him his share if they were
 able.

151 We reached Nama Pan late in the afternoon. Toma and
 152 Gao Feet cleared a werf for Short Kwi, and when he was
 757 settled comfortably with his back against a tree and with
 soft grass and blankets arranged all around him he said softly,
 just to himself and anyone else who might be listening, that
 during the night his leg had fallen off. After he said this he
 began to cry, and Gao Feet slowly crouched beside him, un-
 wound the blanket slowly, and untied the bark, then gently
 lifted the knee away from the calf, which remained on the
 ground, just like the leg of a mummy. When the calf had
 fallen off, Short Kwi had pushed the two pieces back together
 again. Short Kwi was crying and biting his hand and his wife
 was crying, and Toma and Gao Feet stood beside him for a
 minute looking, the expression on their faces as dark as night.
 766 Then they picked up the leg and carried it away to the veld,
 where they buried it in a hole, exactly as if it were a person,
 they were so sad.

152 Later, when we had dressed the stump, Toma and Gao
 Feet came back to sit with Short Kwi and talk with him. Gao
 Feet told about a Bantu man he had seen far in the north who
 had been injured in a mine accident and had been fitted with
 a false foot. Short Kwi could have one too, Gao said; but
 Toma said, almost too depressed to speak: "What does it
 matter? He is a cripple now."

521 Then the men went away and left Short Kwi to rest, and
 758 during the evening the children and young people were talk-

609 she was with her father and mother, though perhaps not nearly as frightened as she would be later when she was far away from Nama Pan in the streets of the city.

732 It was a very sad and heavy day the day that Short Kwi left. It depresses Bushmen terribly to see one of their number crippled, which, of course, in almost every case means the end of that person's productive life as a supporter of the people—one becomes a poor person and depends upon the enforced charity of one's near relatives while suffering avoidance by one's remoter kin; but it depresses Bushmen even more to see one of their number taken away. It is the end of a link in their unity, and when it happens part of the chain of their relationships, part of their pattern is destroyed. That day many people who surely expected never to see Short Kwi again stayed alone by their fires or played the guashi idly, but spoke not a word. The rest of the people, all but Toma, Gao
 152 Feet, and Lazy Kwi, were beset with jealousy and quarreled
 578 on and on all day, with us, with each other. They were jealous because we had given Short Kwi and his wife clothing and within the hour after Short Kwi's departure a crowd of people was squatting in the dust around our camp. The crowd was so thick that we could hardly get through. No one budged an inch to let us by, and when they would catch our eyes, the women, particularly those who had waited outside our tent when we had given Short Kwi's wife the clothes, pointed to holes and frayed spots in their karösses which clearly showed that they, too, needed clothing, and when we did nothing (we had presents of blankets, cloth, beads, shirts, pants, pipes, and knives to give to everyone when we left, but could not give dresses to all the women and could not give the presents now) they glared at us with stony faces and hard eyes.

152 In the afternoon the people were still there, quite dusty

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now but motionless; in the evening they began to get up, one⁵² by one, to go to the veld for food and firewood. Dikai had relented entirely. Before she went off to her evening's work she put her arm around me and told me that she and I were cemented together by our names. But Tu, who suffered from⁵² jealousy more than Dikai, was angry still and chose that mo⁵⁷⁸ ment to make a scene, to force someone to do something for her as well as for Short Kwi. She arose from the vigilant, crouching people and, followed at a distance by her baby daughter, went up to our cook, Philip, and demanded that he give her firewood. He refused because there were three dead trees right outside of camp that Tu could easily have got, in plain sight, not twenty feet away, but she did not look at these. Instead, she began to scream at Philip in a most bitter harangue, and though she became aware at last that everyone had fallen silent and was listening to her she couldn't stop her tongue but went on and on until her entire audience was embarrassed and didn't know where to look. Worse, Philip lost his patience and told her to go away. She bit her lip, glaring, and suddenly there was perfect silence; her words had left her and she just had to stand there, too proud to leave, alone in the center of the crowd of crouching people watching, and she looked very silly and forlorn, robbed of her dignity by her tongue and with her hair ornaments askew on the^[26] back of her head. No one would speak to her; this time she had gone too far.

It was Norna, her daughter, who provided her with the chance to escape. Norna, frightened and bewildered and embarrassed too, had crept up beside Tu and had taken the string of her kaross. Tu must have felt a tug, for she looked down suddenly and, seeing this, turned on Norna, slapping the string out of Norna's hand. There was another agonizing pause and silence while Norna slowly took the string again,

152 and again Tu slapped it away. This time Norna began to
 578 cry, lonely and forlorn in front of all the people, turned on by
 her mother, and she looked very small and defenseless and
 bereft; she cried sadly, not angrily, big tears running down
 her face, her fist in her mouth, looking up at her mother with
 enormous eyes. This was Tu's chance. She snatched up
 Norna and carried her back to the werf.

It was a terrible incident for everyone. That evening Tu still
 felt her shame and when I went to the werf to visit for a mo-
 ment she took the occasion to fix me with her eyes all the way
 across the werf and tell me loudly that in the morning I
 would have to help her clear grass for another werf, for she
 was not going to "live among these people any more." Tu's
 mother, a shameless old woman, came up to me to tell me a
 joke and Tu smoldered.

Not only the adults felt a sense of tension. That evening
 Dikai, looking rather worn and tired, was sitting by her fire
 rubbing her shoulders, which usually ached, she said, when
 862 her two sons, also tired, threw themselves down each on one
 152 side of her and began to nurse, each leaning heavily against
 578 her, each at a breast. Perhaps because she was tired or per-
 593 haps because she had been about to put some tsi nuts in her
 715 fire but now could not because her sons were in the way, she
 looked down at them and mildly suggested to Little Gashe
 that perhaps he could bring himself to stop nursing alto-
 gether, being old enough now. Little Gashe did not take
 this kindly at all. He looked up at her, then took his mouth
 from her nipple and cursed her with a formal, deadly curse.
 "May the spirit of Nisa, who is dead," he said, "take you by
 the throat and choke you." He then took the nipple back in
 his mouth and sucked on, thoughtfully.

152 I could hardly believe my ears. Children are expected not
 578 to curse their parents, but, worst of all, Little Gashe had in-
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voked those supposedly unmentioned beings, the spirits of¹⁵²
 the dead. Dikai was not offended, though; she gazed down⁵⁷⁸
 at him calmly. "You, you little thing," she said, "no curse⁵⁹³
 that you could say would hurt me."⁷⁷⁵

Much later in the evening when John and Dan and I were⁵⁷⁴
 sitting at our own fire just before going to bed, Dikai and her⁶⁰⁸
 nephew, Toma's son, came to visit us, Dikai with Little Dabe
 asleep on her back. It was a quiet evening, people were sitting
 at their own werfs and though they were screened from us by
 grass we could hear their voices talking and see the light of
 their fires. When Dikai came, Lazy Kwi, whose werf was on
 the other side of our camp, heard her speak and stood up to
 see what was happening, looming suddenly from where he
 had been sitting only a few feet away. He came through the
 grass to visit also, and we sat by the fire listening to Dikai as
 she told us about various relatives in the north and what kin-
 ship terms we should use for them, I being named for her and
 John for Toma. Lazy Kwi told Dan that Dan had been named
 for him, but named Kwi Cheeks instead of Lazy Kwi, and
 when Dan asked why his nickname was Cheeks all Lazy Kwi
 could say was: "Because of your cheeks." We thought, but
 we could not think of a reason, as there was nothing about
 Dan's cheeks that might attract attention, except that he had
 recently shaved his beard so that his cheeks were visible.

Dan said that now he had no beard, no hair, no name,
 which Lazy Kwi thought was terribly funny and said: "Throw
 away your beard hairs, throw away your name, but tako Kwi
 instead and be my namesake." Shortly after that we went to
 bed. Relations seemed less strained.

One morning about a week after Short Kwi had gone, when⁷³²
 the people were resting and the werf was quiet, we heard a

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who agreed and supported each other. From where they sat, but not all at once and not in an excited babble, they made their remarks clearly, with quite long pauses between. Some expressed themselves in agreement with /U as she recounted Khuan//a's faults and deviations, past and present. Khuan//a's family and friends, who had moved to sit near her, denied the accusations from time to time, but did not talk as much or as loudly as /U. Khuan//a muttered or was silent. /U said she disapproved of her sister's daughter marrying the son of such a woman, but would reconsider her position if Khuan//a gave the expected gift to Gao Medicine. The talk lasted about twenty minutes. At that point Khuan//a got up and walked away and the 'talk' subsided to /U's mutterings and others' low conversation. In a few days Khuan//a gave Gao Medicine a present, not the gift in question, but one which satisfied Gao, and, as they said, 'they all started again in peace'.

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There is a third form of verbal expression which might be called a 'shout' rather than a 'talk', but as far as I know the /Kung have no special name for it. It is a verbal explosion. Fate receives the heat of the remarks in a 'shout'.

We were present on two such occasions, one in 1952, the other in 1953. Both were in response to the burning of scherms. In both instances little children, whose mothers had taken their eyes off them though they were only a few feet away, had picked up burning sticks from the fire, had dropped them on the soft, dry bedding grass in the scherms and, at the first burst of flame, had sensibly run outside unscathed. On the first occasion, the two children, who were about three years old, were frightened and were soothed and comforted by their mothers and other relatives. They were not scolded. On the second occasion, Khuan//a, the two-year-old granddaughter of Old ≠Toma and /Gam, had set fire to her grandparents' scherm. She was not apparently frightened at all and was found placidly chewing her grandfather's well-toasted sandal. She was not scolded either. What was especially interesting was the behaviour of the Bushmen. On both occasions they rushed to the burning scherms, shouting all at once, in extremely loud, excited voices, volcanic eruptions of words. The men made most of the noise, but the women were also talking excitedly. No one tried to do anything, nor could they, for the scherms burned like the fiery furnace. I asked the interpreters to stand close to one person at a time and try to hear what he said. People were telling where they had been when the fire started, why they had not got there sooner. They shouted that mothers should not take their eyes off their children, that the children might have been burned. They lamented the objects which had been destroyed—all in the greatest din I have ever heard humans produce out of themselves. It went on for about eight or ten minutes in bursts, then tapered off for another ten. While Old ≠Toma's scherm was burning, he and his wife, /Gam, the great maker of beads, sat on one side weeping. After the shouting had subsided, a dozen or more people set about looking for Old ≠Toma's knife blade and arrow points and picking up what beads they could find for /Gam in the cooling ashes. The two instances of 'shouts' provided examples of the vehemence which vocal expression can have and vividly illustrated the /Kung way of venting emotion in words.

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There is still another kind of talk, not conversation, which I consider to be an outlet for tension and anxiety. We happened to hear it only in relation to anxiety about food and do not know if other concerns sometimes find expression in this way.

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SHARING, TALKING, AND GIVING: RELIEF OF

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[522] uproarious, derisive laughter. All this is joking and one should not take offence. The /Kung say this teaches young persons to keep their tempers.

In contrast to the joking is their care in other aspects of conduct to avoid giving offence. ≠Toma said, for instance, that, if he were forming a hunting party and a man whom he did not want asked to join him, he would be careful to refuse indirectly by making some excuse and try not to offend the man.

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578 Gossip which can stir up trouble is discouraged. People do gossip but usually discreetly, in low voices, with near and trusted relatives and friends. It is best to mind one's own business, they say.

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626 People are expected to control their tempers and do so to a remarkable degree. If they are angry, aggrieved, or frustrated, they tend to mope rather than to become aggressive, expressing their feelings in low mutters to their close relatives and friends. ≠Toma told us that he had lost his temper twice when he was a young man and on one occasion had knocked his father down. On the other he had pushed his wife into hot ashes. It had so frightened him to realize that he could lose control of himself and behave in this violent way that, he said, he had not lost his temper since.

MEAT-SHARING

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579 The /Kung custom of sharing meat helps to keep stress and hostility over food at a low intensity. The practical value of using up the meat when it is fresh is obvious to all and the /Kung are fully aware of the enormous social value of the custom. The fear of hunger is mitigated; the person one shares with will share in turn when he gets meat and people are sustained by a web of mutual obligation. If there is hunger, it is commonly shared. There are no distinct haves and have-nots. One is not alone.

To have a concept of the potential stress and jealousy which meat-sharing mitigates in /Kung society one has only to imagine one family eating meat and others not when they are settled only five or ten feet apart in a firelit werf and there are no walls for privacy. The veld does not hide secret killing and eating because actions are printed in its sands for all to read. The idea of eating alone and not sharing is shocking to the /Kung. It makes them shriek with an uneasy laughter. Lions could do that, they say, not men.

224 The custom of meat-sharing applies only to the big game animals. Small animals the size of duikers or smaller, birds, tortoises, lizards, grasshoppers, snakes, and ostrich eggs are picked up incidentally and belong to the person who shoots, snares, finds or catches them. He may keep these for himself and his immediate family and may share them as he chooses, as if they were veldkos. ≠Toma says that, if there is only a little, he and his family eat a meal and give a little to anyone who happens to be near by at the time.

Meat-sharing applies to the big animals which are deliberately hunted by organized hunting parties. In the Nyae Nyae region they are kudu, gemsbok, wildebeest, hartebeest, springbok, warthogs and ostrich. Eland are found less commonly and buffalo rarely. The Nyae Nyae hunters managed to shoot giraffe occasionally. Giraffe are royal game by S.W.A. law, but the Nyae Nyae /Kung had not known this. When they were told, they called them 'Morrisi cows'. (Mr. Robert Morris was the Commissioner of Native Affairs at Runtu.)

The system by which meat is shared begins with the hunters, but the composition

/KUNG BUSHMAN RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

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another or parts of themselves. In appearance and other characteristics the old $\neq$ Gao/na was more man-like than supernatural. He lived on the earth among men. Like men he was subject to passions, hungers, sins, stupidities, failures, frustrations, and humiliations, but men imagine him to be on a larger scale and more grotesque than their own. Like Bushmen of today, his great concerns were hunger and sex. To the /Kung the two worst sins, the unthinkable, unspeakable sins, are cannibalism and incest. $\neq$ Gao/na committed both these sins quite unconcernedly. He ate his older brother-in-law and his younger brother-in-law and raped his son's wife.

$\neq$ Gao/na, his Tun/ga (the Fat Paouw), and the Pit¹

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$\neq$ Gao/na's wives were sisters. They had a brother who was a paouw. One day $\neq$ Gao/na met the paouw, his tun/ga. [Tun/ga is the kin term for wife's brother older than the speaker.] His tun/ga was very fat. A fat paouw has bags of fat under his wings. $\neq$ Gao/na and his tun/ga spoke together and parted. $\neq$ Gao/na was surprised to see so much fat. He said, 'Oh, how fat my tun/ga is.' A few miles on they met again. $\neq$ Gao/na said, 'Look, do you see that veld fire over there?' He pointed with his arm away up. The paouw said, 'Do you mean that fire?' He pointed, but only with a restricted gesture, keeping his wing to his side. 'No, $\neq$ Gao/na said, 'THAT fire,' and he pointed with his arm far up, his whole armpit showing. 'I see it,' said the paouw, and he stretched his wing far up to point. $\neq$ Gao/na was standing behind him. He seized the fat below the paouw's wing and cut it off and ran home. The paouw cursed $\neq$ Gao/na. 'Break your bones and die,' he said. 'Die of a broken back or die of a broken neck,' he said.

$\neq$ Gao/na took the fat home and rubbed his wooden basins with it. His wives came home and found the wooden basins covered with fat and they asked him what he had eaten that was so fat. $\neq$ Gao/na said that he got the fat from a puff adder. He said he beat it with a stick until the fat from the front went down the middle, and beat the tail until the fat from the back went up the back to the middle. $\neq$ Gao/na now planned how he would get his tun/ga. He slept that night. The next morning he set snares under the tree where the paouw went to eat gum. $\neq$ Gao/na then met the paouw again. The paouw was wary and wouldn't come near. $\neq$ Gao/na said, 'Why are you so wild with me?' [Wild is the opposite of tame, domesticated, or confident.] 'There is a tree there with gum under it but my eyes are not good enough to see it.' He said, 'Let us have a contest; we shall see who can see the gum first. The one who sees it first must run and snatch it.' So they went to the tree and saw the gum. The paouw ran fast to get it, and $\neq$ Gao/na ran too but he did not run so fast. The paouw snatched the gum and the snare caught him, and $\neq$ Gao/na ran up and clubbed him, and carried him home. $\neq$ Gao/na's wives were out for veldkos. He put the fat from the other wing in a small pot and the body of the paouw in a big pot. When the wing fat was ready he ate it, and ate and ate, but he ate too much and he went out and had diarrhoea. The wives came home and suspected that perhaps he had killed their brother. The paouw began to expand in the pot and he swelled and swelled until *tsak!* the pot burst and pieces of meat came whizzing out so that $\neq$ Gao/na had to duck away from them. When all the meat was out, the paouw came back together again and flew away. $\neq$ Gao/na chased after him but the wives called to him, 'Come back, you forgot your stick.' $\neq$ Gao/na came back and got his stick and ran after the paouw again. The wives called him, 'Come back, you forgot your

¹ I wish to acknowledge with gratitude and pleasure the assistance of our daughter, Elisabeth Marshall Thomas, in gathering the material of the old tales, as well as other data. The first tale is here. In paraphrasing the tales, we adhered to the events, the

ideas, and the details, incorporating them as they were told us, but we have put the tales into our own words, attempting to preserve something of the quality of the telling as it came to our ears.

LORNA MARSHALL

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to do so. Lack of privacy makes it almost impossible to keep an affair secret, and violent jealousy and anger can be aroused. Fearing any disruptive force, the !Kung disapprove.

LIFE CYCLE

CHILD TRAINING • !Kung parents are gentle, protective, and permissive with all their children and express their affection especially with babies. It is a most common sight to see fathers fondly kissing them with pursed lips and smacks. The mother, wherever she goes, carries her infant tied to her left side, skin to skin, in a little leather sling where it can reach her breast. When she sits, she takes the infant out of its sling, holds it, lets it nurse the other breast.

The !Kung believe that long nursing is essential to the survival and development of their children and encourage them to continue until they are three or four or older. These people practice infanticide and, in explaining it, say that they must space their babies so that each will be able to nurse long enough to ensure his having strong legs. An infant cannot thrive on their harsh foods, they say, even though they chew the food and put it into the infants' mouths, and the mother cannot support two entirely with her milk, excellent though !Kung lactation appears to be. They supplement the milk with adult food as soon as the child can eat it, so that a child is accustomed to it and ready to be weaned at three or four when the next baby comes. But, even so, the mother weans gradually, letting the older child have a drink of milk occasionally through the day. If the mother does not have or keep another baby but still has milk, she will allow or encourage her child to continue nursing. Other children tend to make fun of a child who nurses until he is six or so, and, in response to their teasing, a child may wean himself quite abruptly.

Babies are naked and, since there are no floors but the desert sand, not much is made of their urinating wherever they are. When they defecate, they are wiped with grass and the fecal matter is cleaned up at once by some older child or adult and carried off. As soon as children can walk fairly well they are led by the hand and encouraged to go out of the werf for their toilet needs, at first for the sake of cleanliness and, as they grow older, for the sake of modesty as well. (!Kung adults are exceedingly modest about uncovering their genitalia. Their incest taboo influences this behavior, I think, very strongly.)

Infants sleep in their mothers' arms. Young children sleep wrapped in karosses beside their parents' fire. Boys from the age of about eleven or twelve sleep at a boys' fire, not far from the family of one of them. Girls at that age go to sleep with a grandmother or some widow, or several of them